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NASA STUDIES POSSIBILITIES FOR SKYLAB RE-USE

In the event NASA decides to reboost the orbiting Skylab space station to a higher altitude, this could provide an opportunity to reactivate and use the on-board systems and instruments in a variety of useful projects.

The large living quarters and crew accommodations aboard the Skylab would be a welcome adjunct to Space Shuttle and Spacelab missions involving extensive mission equipment and long mission durations. In addition, useful additional experiments might be conducted with Skylab instruments, in some cases in conjunction with complementary instruments planned for flight on Spacelab.

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There is also the possibility for new experiments, missions or demonstrations made possible with the Orbiter and Spacelab docked with Skylab. This might include assembly and support of large space structures for communications, solar energy or other public service operations.

NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala., has awarded parallel study contracts, each in the amount of $125,000, to Martin Marietta Corp., Denver, Colo., and McDonnell Douglas Astronautics Co., Huntington Beach, Calif. The two firms will conduct simultaneous but independent studies of the possibilities and benefits of Skylab re-use.

The nine-month studies will concentrate on missions, experiments and demonstrations that could most effectively use the Skylab facilities, and identification of benefits that could be derived from its use. Some of the areas to be examined are:

- Potential for using experiments or equipment already on board the Skylab and the opportunity to determine first-hand the effects on materials and equipment of 10 or more years' residency in space.

- Possibility of providing crew quarters and other support provisions for Spacelab missions and experiments whose nature would benefit from long duration and an additional energy supply.

- Opportunities that the Skylab in itself or in conjunction with other hardware elements might offer for new missions or experiments. For example, the relatively large facility (comparable to a three-bedroom home) might provide a convenient work platform for fabrication and construction of large space structures or facilitate applying these structures into useful demonstrations or operational systems.

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